

Partnership News

23 December
Fourth Sunday of Advent



Partnership Church Services Today

8.30am Holy Communion every Sunday
1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday at Putnoe Heights
2nd and 4th Sunday at St. Mark's Church

Today 23 December

9.30am St Mark's – Morning Worship

Preacher - Mr John Ayers
Leadership - Mrs Elizabeth Bean
Intercessions - Mr Chris Izzard

11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship

Preacher - Mr John Ayres
Leadership – Mrs Veta Hudson-Rae
Intercessions - Mrs Sylvia Cohen

*Please note no Holy Communion
at St Mark's on Boxing Day*

Sunday 30 December

9.30 St Marks – Holy Communion with PCH

Preacher – Mr Richard Ledger
Leadership - Mrs Jean Bank
Intercessions – Mr Warwick Holden

11.00 am Putnoe - Holy Communion with PCH

Preacher – Mr Richard Ledger
Leadership – Mr Gordon Evans
Intercessions – Mr Alan Baylis

Readings 1. 1.Sam 2 :1-20,26 **2.**Colossians 3:12-17
3. Luke 2 :41-52

Midweek Holy Communion at St Mark's Chapel every
Wednesday at 10.00am and at Sir William Harpur House on
first Monday of every month at 10.00am

Thank You

The flowers at Putnoe Heights Church this week
have been given by Patricia Pollard in loving
memory of her mother Eva Hopkins on her birthday.

The flowers at St Mark's Church this week
include donations from Elizabeth Bean in loving
memory of her parents, Neil and Elizabeth MacLeod
and Catherine Corfield and family in memory of
John.

*We are grateful when people make donations towards
flowers perhaps to celebrate a special occasion such as
an anniversary or in memory of a loved one. Please
contact Miss Marion Prior 303254 (St. Mark's) or Ann Hitt
404186 (Putnoe Heights) or add your name to the rota on
the foyers*

Prayer for Sunday

O Lord our God, the life of all that look to you,
and the help of those who fly to you; cleanse
our hearts and our consciences, that we
may venture forth with perfect love and pray to
you with confidence and hope; through Christ
our Lord. Amen.

St Basil (c.330-379)

The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

107 Dover Crescent, Bedford MK41 8QR
266952 Fax- 402624 nsm@thisischurch.com
(Sam also works full time as a Vice
President for Hewlett Packard)

Deacon Jane Mills

12 Hartop Close, Bedford MK41 8HE
348091 Mobile 07807 146535 jane@thisischurch.com

The Reverend Charles Royden

The Vicarage, Calder Rise. MK41 7UY
309175 Mobile 07973 113861 vicar@thisischurch.com

Partnership News is sent out by email every Saturday
in a colour edition. If you would like to receive a copy
please send an email entitled 'Partnership News' to
vicar@thisischurch.com. Please note that any items submitted
for inclusion in Partnership News will automatically be posted on
our website and may appear in other local media sources.

Partnership News is also archived on our church website
www.ThisChurch.com

Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator

Mrs Mary Stubbs 406784 Mary@Thisischurch.com
*Please inform us if you know of anyone who is ill, bereaved,
housebound, requires a visit, home communion or counselling services.
Please also ask us if you would like a home visit for any reason.*

Churchyards Administrator

Mrs Avril Williams 01234 342613

Putnoe Heights Church Centre

Open Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm, Friday 9am - 1pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 365630 putnoe@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Mr Geoff Gypps 365630 mob 07947 902846
Leadership Team Mrs. Jean Kirk 317699
Treasurer Mr John Hitt 404186 treasurerph@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator Mr Lawrence Wyatt 350188
Youth Team Leader Carolyn Morris youth@thisischurch.com

St. Mark's Church Centre

Open Monday - Friday 9am - 5.00pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 342613 office@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Miss Wendy Rider 342613
Leadership Team - Morag Stewart 360103
Treasurer - Mr Ian Farthing 210892
treasurer@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator Jim Williams 360605

Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

Monday

9.15 –3.45 pm Mon and Wed/ 9.15-12.15pm Tues/ Thurs/Fri. Hazeldene Heights Pre-school. See website for more details www.ThisChurch.com
Head teacher Mrs Laura Leggett 326685
8.30-5.30pm Pre-school Mon-Fri St Mark's
9.-3.45pm Top Marks Mon-Fri St Mark's
Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin **312634**
(See website for more details)
.9.45am - Body Control Pilates –Putnoe Heights
Stephanie Smith 357787 or 07973174430
10.00am Bakers Barn Art Group. St Mark's Mrs Berry 211955
10.30am U3A Play reading St Mark's (see contact details below)
2.00pm U3A Calligraphy at St Mark's 2nd week (see contact details below)
2.00pm U3A Relaxation & Meditation at St Mark's 1st & 3rd week starting 1st October (see contact details below)
12.15pm Story box Putnoe Heights We welcome the under 5's and their carers to join them between 12.15 and 1.15 for a sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing. Contact Carolyn Morris youth@thischurch.com 365630
1.30-2.45pm Chat & Make For babies and toddlers 0-5. Crafts, toys,songs,story and refreshments £1. More details email– chatandplay@hotmail.co.uk . Restarts on 10 September
2pm U3A Music Appreciation (see contact details below)
4.15pm Kumon Maths Putnoe Heights. Mrs Raksha Mistry 01908 392698
6.00pm Brownies St Mark's. Mrs C Mathew 826190
6.15 pm Brownies Putnoe. Sharon Tanner 01767699399 or 07720713738.
6.15 Pilates at Putnoe Heights Jane Butcher 300859
6.15pm-8.15pm Fit for Life Yoga - Putnoe Heights Contact Jane Butcher 07891879571
6.30pm Boot Camp Putnoe Heights – Laura Amor 341152 / 07976259081
7.00pm Sugarcraft Guild St Mark's 1st week Pat Nicholson 353518
7.00pm Cancer Care Society. St Mark's. 1st Week. Mr J Dewhurst 01908 377020
7.15pm Guides. St Mark's. Mrs Gill Lake 218091
7.30pm Whist Drive. St Mark's 3rd & 5th week . Next meeting– 21 January Judith Stanton. 823313
7.30pm House group 30 The Ridgeway. The home of Eddy & Margaret Peck 267567
7.45pm Opus Choir at St Mark's Mrs Sutherland 269100
8pm 'Get Fit, Stay Fit' at Putnoe Diane Field 404976

Tuesday

9.30am Jo Jingles. St. Mark's. Music & movement for pre-school children. Renu Elston 07790206016
9.30am Candlewicking (Needlework). Putnoe Heights. Pat McCart 365507
9.30am -12.30 & 4-9pm Slimming World St. Mark's. Helen Skinner 07989080389
10am Autism Beds Adult Support Group. St Mark's. Sally Cripsley 350704
11.15am U3A Keep Fit Putnoe Heights (see contact details below)
1pm –2.30pm Drop in Wiggles and Jiggles 0-5 years, Putnoe Children's Centre. Please call Trudy Hamilton (centre assistant) for more information 340552
1.15pm U3A Cinema Group. St Mark's (contacts below)
2.00pm U3A Book Group 1 St Mark's (3rd Wk) (see contact details below)

2.00pm U3A Book Group 2 St Mark's (2nd Wk) (see contact details)
2.00pm Library Walk W.I. Putnoe Heights, meets monthly. Morag Tomkins 356895
2pm U3A Photography Group 3 St. Mark's (1st Wk) (contact details below).
2.30pm Mother Teresa Support Group. St Mark's Fortnightly . Wool and knitting needles provided. Mrs Maureen Watling 262225
2.15pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup. St Mark's Fortnightly. Mary Stubbs 406784.
4.00pm-6.15pm Stars School of Dance. Esther Richardson 295862 or 07917582468
6.15pm Pilates St Mark's Church Jane Butcher 0789187957
7pm—8.30pm Daisy Birthing Putnoe Heights Susie 07980447390
6.00-7.00pm Zumba at St Mark's. Contact Denise Worker 07900 232648
6.30pm MT Karate (all ages) Karen King 07941264885
7pm Keep Fit. St. Mark's Jan Gregory 328455
7pm Tabernacle of Truth Church Putnoe Heights Bible study & prayers. Sacha Ojo 07590597891 or www.tabernacleoftruth.co.uk
7pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club (Meets fortnightly). Janet King 313946 Next meeting 8 January 2.30pm Afternoon. Details Janet King 313946
8.15pm - 10.15pm Bedford Advanced Dancers Workshop St. Mark's 1st Tuesday in month. Shirley Sadler 01767 651767

Wednesday

9am -1pm Machine Knitting group at Putnoe Heights, fortnightly. Contact Marion Sutton 217647
9.30am Body Control Pilates. Putnoe Heights. Stephanie Smith 357787 or 07973174430.
9.30am Discovery & Do (Childminders) St. Mark's. Clare Simmons 328380 or 07788824666
10am-2pm Open House at St Mark's for those with learning disabilities., their friends, family , carers and supporters 342613.
10am U3A Gardening Group 3 St Marks. (contact below)
10.00am Holy Communion. St. Mark's Chapel. A half hour service followed by coffee. All welcome.
10am U3A Card Making, St Marks (see contact details below)
10am U3A Diet and Nutrition- Putnoe (contact below)
11.15am U3A Keep Fit
12.30pm Luncheon Club. Putnoe fortnightly. Next meeting 16 January 2013 Putnoe Heights Office 365630
1.00-3pm Police Surgery at Putnoe Heights (Fortnightly)
1.15pm Bridge Club for the Retired. St. Mark's. Mr Barnes 261811
2.00-4.00pm U3A Craft St Marks.(see contact details below)
2.00pm Fifty Plus Keep Fit Mrs Webster 856966
2pm U3A Gilbert and Sullivan
2.15pm - Fifty plus Keep Fit. Putnoe Heights Mrs Webster 856966
3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church. St Mark's (3rd Wk). for children of lower school age and their carers. Bible-based story, crafts, singing and a meal. Next meeting January 16 Wendy Waters /401834
4.15pm Kumon Maths. Putnoe Heights Mrs Raksha Mistry 01908 392698
6.00 pm Brownies. St Mark's. Mrs C Warden 219731
6.15pm Yoga and Relaxation Putnoe Heights Racheall

Monton 01234 297138 or 07910835994.

6-8pm Karate. St Mark's Karen King 079412 64885

7.00pm Bunyan Bridge. St. Mark's Brian Sallows 407725

7.00pm Archaeological & Local History Society Putnoe Heights monthly. Sylvia Woods 365095

7.00pm Putnoe Guild Putnoe monthly Mrs O Holt 266004

7.00pm Line Dancing Putnoe Mike Del-Boyer 348378

8.00pm Badminton Club Putnoe Heights All welcome. Ken Marriott 214867

8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club at St Mark's 1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month. Next meeting will be 16 January Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments. Valmai 219555 Rosemary 405594 or Graham 406359 for more details.

8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club St Mark's 1st week in the month. Jean Ross 771870

Thursday

9.30am Thursday Prayer Group. Putnoe Heights. Valerie Capon 356306

Request for prayer can be written in the prayer diary on the information table.

9.45am Yoga Putnoe Heights Denise Green 244970

9.45am Chat and Play St.Mark's. A term time group for Mums & toddlers.0-5 Jo Garner 400071 or 07719670624

110-11.30am Gentle Yoga For more details contact Helen Nicholson Tel.03003004305

12pm Storybox . St Mark's welcome the under 5's and their carers to join them between 12 noon and 1pm for a sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing. Lots of fun. Contact Jaana Swaby 363283

1.30 - 3.00pm NHS Baby Clinic 1st and 3rd Thursdays St. Mark's 267444

1pm—2.30pm Drop in (small hall) Next Steps 9-24months Putnoe Children's Centre.Please call Trudy Hamilton (centre assistant) for more information 340552.

2pm -Friendly Chicago Bridge at Putnoe Heights £2 per session inc. refreshments. New members welcome. Contact Pat 01234 294220.

2pm U3A Current Affairs - Putnoe Heights

2-4pm U3A Indoor Games. St.Mark's (contact below)

2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society St Mark's Mary Rich 272470

6.15 pm Weightwatchers. St. Mark's. Clare Martin 07805408811.

6.15pm Brownies. Putnoe Heights Lou Watkins .

7.00pm Club 2000 Putnoe Nina Ovenden 825059

7pm U3A Folk & Poetry St Marks (2nd and 4th week) (see contact details below)

7.15pm Putnoe Art Group Bob Wardale 406094

7.00pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild St Mark's 3rd week in month. Carol Plant 01832710504

8 -10pm Bedford Folk dancers (formerly Barn dancers) Meet weekly at Putnoe Heights Different guest callers each week. All welcome, cost £2 Including refreshments. More details Ron 825574 or Shirley 01767 651767

8.00pm Bedford Writers Circle. St Mark's 1st week in month. Mr Newton 01525 378193

8.00pm Magpies Women's Group St Mark's 2nd & 4th week Pat Cass 294220

8.00pm Brickhill Ladies Group St Mark's 1st and 3rd week in month Kay Logan 01234 309105.

Friday

10am -12.00 U3A Photography St Marks.(4th week) (see contact details below)

10am - 12 & 1.15 - 3.15pm U3A Beginners French St.

Marks (see contact details below)

2.00-4.00 pm U3A Whist St Marks. (contact details below)

2pm U3A Italian-Putnoe Heights (contact details below)

2pm U3A Gardening - Putnoe Heights

4.50pm-8.15pm Stars School of Dance Esther Richardson 295862 or 07917582468

6.00-7.00pm Zumba at St Mark's. Contact Denise Worker (07900 232648

6.15pm Yoga and Relaxation Putnoe Heights. Racheall Monton 297138 or 07910835994

7.45 - 10.45pm Bedford Astrology Club.St Marks(2nd week) Carol Brown 01438 233385

Saturday

10.00am Theatretrain St Mark's. Dancing acting, singing. Kate Howard 01234 782414

Young Embroiderers bi monthly Putnoe Heights Terry Fletcher 357198

2.15pm Society of Recorder Players at Putnoe Heights. G Parry 01462 674792

6.45pm Duplicate Bridge. St Mark's Mrs Pillinger 212066

Sunday

9.30 - 10.30 Church and Sunday School at St Mark's with crèche for under 3's

11.00 - 12.00 Church and Junior at Putnoe Heights for the under 9's and Young Peoples Fellowship (Y.P.F) for our young adults. A crèche is also available.

1pm Tabernacle of Truth Church Putnoe Heights Sacha Ojo 07590597891 or w.tabernacleoftruth.co.uk

7-9pm Tae Kwon Do St Mark's Adrian Felice www.bedfordtkd.com 07964356355



U3A For information on the U3A groups meeting at St Mark's and Putnoe Heights Church please contact Yvonne Francis ☎405119

Diary Dates

St Mark's Church Council – 19 Feb,11 June
St Mark's Leadership Team - 22 January
Putnoe Heights Leadership Team - 5 February
Putnoe Heights Management Meeting 24 January
Putnoe Church Council - 19 February
Pastoral Group Meeting - 5 February
Churchyard Committee -
Brickhill Parish Council Meetings -
Commemoration Service
Circuit meeting - 7 February
Deanery Meeting -
Woodland Burial Trustees–
Putnoe Heights Children & Youth Meeting -
Please advise St Mark's Church Office of the dates of your meetings.

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Introduction

God might have chosen many ways in which to take human form and become known to us. By inhabiting the womb of Mary a very clear message is made about where God's priorities lie. There is no bias towards respectability, wealth, prestige, indeed all of things which we might value seem to have been deliberately avoided. Imagine today an unmarried peasant girl praising God for honouring her with a child in this way, would any of us listen?

Perhaps one of the things which we need to learn from Christmas is to expect God in unlikely places. Our Bible notes this week explore just how much Christmas is about God working in spite of appearances to the contrary



Madonna in Prayer by Sassoferrato, c1640-50

Opening Verse of Scripture — Psalm 80:19

Restore us, O LORD God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved

Collect Prayer

God our Redeemer, you chose the Virgin Mary, to be the mother of our Lord and saviour. Fill us with your grace that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

First Bible Reading – Micah 5: 2-5

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labour gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace. When the Assyrian invades our land and marches through our fortresses, we will raise against him seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men

(This is the word of the Lord **All: Thanks be to God**)

Second Bible Reading - Hebrews 10: 5-10

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'" First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

(This is the word of the Lord **All: Thanks be to God**)

Gospel Reading - Luke 1: 39-56

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his

name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home. (This is the Word of the Lord **All: Thanks be to God**)

Post Communion Prayer

Heavenly Father, who didst choose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us thy servants with thy grace, that in all things we may embrace thy holy will and with her rejoice in thy salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Commentary

Mary is a figure we learn quite a lot about in the pages of the Gospels. However the church has added quite a lot more detail in traditions which have developed about her. Some of these traditions give the appearance of later embellishments without any real substance. Later traditions seemed to want to make Mary out to be something god like, as the vulnerable peasant girl was jettisoned in favour of Mary the equal to the Egyptian goddess Isis and other female deities. Other important female goddesses had virgin births, perhaps the Christians wanted Mary to sound better than the others, and so she took on more god like qualities and became removed from real life. Mary has eventually become, sinless, taken into heaven, an intercessor on behalf of us sinners. As Christianity grew in the Greco-Roman world it took on some shocking characteristics. Otherworldliness became prized, a devaluation of the bodily and the physical. So it was quite early on that Mary became removed from the stuff of our existence.

But do we really want a goddess, or do we want a real Mary, not least so that Jesus became real man, flesh like our flesh. An ordinary Mary was vulnerable like us and like the Bible tells us as she grew old she needed to be cared for. *John 19-25-27*. What value is it to create an otherworldly Mary who never had sex or a proper family. Perhaps the majority of Christians across the world adhere to the belief that Jesus was an only child, that he never had real brothers and sisters and never dealt with real family life. This removes another piece of the humanity of Mary and of Jesus.

I don't like the thought of Mary suffering because she is vulnerable like us, but she does. She watches her own child suffer and die a cruel death before her own eyes. Christianity has always been able to address the dreadful crises in which we humans find ourselves, because we believe that in taking flesh Jesus went through what we go through. When we open our papers or listen to the news and read about innocent people being caught up in armed conflicts, children being shot in schools, it is because of the earthly humanity of Mary and Jesus that our faith has something to say in situations of grief and suffering.

Mary is not somebody we worship, she is somebody who shares our humanity, goes through the pain and suffering of our mortal life and even as a young girl responds to an unasked for pregnancy by praising God! Such a figure is not worshipped, but surely admired, honoured and set as our example.

In the words of the Magnificat which we read today Mary is subversive, using words which are a magnificent radical agenda for social change. Mary's song is a statement of what she believes about God. Like the song of Hannah on which it is modelled, it celebrates the character of God as the great turner of tables. The whole of the history of Israel is about God tearing down the arrogant and lifting up those who are down. He is the God of the poor and the oppressed, under his hand the meek inherit the earth.

All of this is so much more powerful because it is spoken by an ordinary person who is one of us. What we really do know about Mary makes her instantly likeable. We can all relate to Mary, she embodies characteristics of humanity in which we want to rejoice. A young girl, who has to travel away from her home on a donkey. She has to struggle and take on a difficult journey, to give birth in a stable. She encounters and triumphs, even when confronted by an evil king and she has to become refugee or asylum seeker and escape to Egypt. Some see her as a wayward adulteress, a scrounger or an economic migrant, yet for us she is a role model because Mary goes through the kinds of stuff that we go through.

Like every parent Mary sometimes made mistakes, she struggled to understand what Jesus was up to. She is fallible. Like us Mary makes mistakes. In the Temple (*Luke 2:41-51*) at the age of twelve Jesus rebukes His mother for not understanding that He must be in His Father's house. At the Wedding at Cana (*John 2:1-11*) Jesus once again rebuked Mary for failing to understand Him. Eventually Mary joins his brothers who want to take Jesus by force because they think that he has gone mad. (*Mark 3:21, 31-35*).

Yet for all of her failings, in spite of her inability to understand so much of what is going on, just like us Mary keeps her faith in Jesus. Mary isn't superwoman, she is ordinary woman, ordinary human. That is her attraction and her strength for us a role model. Mary hasn't a clue what lies ahead of her, yet to God she says 'yes'

Mary faces a mind bending proposition. Her whole life is going to be changed. She is to become pregnant, bring disgrace on her family and herself and Joseph. But Mary says to Gods challenge 'let it be' and in saying 'let it be' she affirms her belief that somehow God is not bound by any human constraints. She affirms her willingness to suffer a life which will ultimately lead to a sword through her soul. (*Luke 2:35*).

She accepts God's plan for her in spite of all the sniggering which she will get. We should not let our reaction to some of the excess about Mary to blind us to her unique and noble example. That example is to us. To encourage us and to sustain us through our commitment. *Charles Royden*

Meditation You can't kill a song

Victor Jara was 38 when he died. In the 1960s he wrote songs of protest against the ruling elite of his country. He was one of the founding fathers of Chile's 'New Song' movement which in 1970 helped elect the democratic popular unity government of Salvador Allende. As a result Chile's right wing hated him. On 11 September 1973 Victor Jara had been due to sing in the Santiago University. Instead, with the coup of General Augusto Pinochet, underway, he was arrested and led to Santiago's boxing stadium. Over four days he was tortured, beaten, electrocuted, and his hands and wrists broken to ensure he could never play guitar. Finally he was machine-gunned to death, at the age of 38. His widow Joan was told where to find his body which was thrown to the street, and was later found in the morgue among many anonymous bodies that she saw that day.

Chileans loved Victor Jara's songs and painted murals with his images. He even wrote in the boxing stadium where he was being tortured and eventually murdered. The scraps of paper where it was written on were smuggled out by those who survived. The song remains unfinished. The lyrics literally stop mid-sentence as he was led away to the changing rooms of the stadium and was shot repeatedly through the chest. "Silence and screams are the end of my song" he wrote.

Prayers for Sunday and the Week ahead

Merciful Father our souls proclaim your greatness and our spirits rejoice in the salvation which you have given to us, you have done great things for us and we share with Mary in praising your name. May Mary be to us a model of witness and service. Give us your Holy Spirit that we may boldly proclaim your name and tell of your ways.

You are the friend of sinners, you show your deepest love to the weak, the vulnerable and those who are down trodden. May we faithfully live out your Gospel of love by caring for those who are in need, those who are hungry, those who are poor.

We pray for those who are in authority, that they may be instruments of justice and peace.

Gracious God, you hear the voice of all who cry out in suffering or despair throughout the world. Visit all in need with the comfort of your presence, that they may live secure in the knowledge of your divine love.

We pray for families at Christmas, that children would be blessed by peaceful, kind and loving homes. We pray for those who task is to offer protection to those at risk, those who work to help struggling relationships. We pray for families struggling with debt and financial worries. Give strength in our community to those who work to offer help to the broken hearted, the sick and frail. Help us in your name to lift up the hearts of the humble and fill the hungry with good things.

The Coming

By the Welsh poet and Anglican priest RS Thomas (1913–2000):

And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look he said,
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce
Colour. The light burned
There; crusted buildings
Cast their shadows: a bright
Serpent, a river
Uncoiled itself, radiant
With slime.
On a bare
Hill a bare tree saddened
The sky. Many people
Held out their thin arms
To it, as though waiting
For a vanished April
To return to its crossed
Boughs. The son watched
Them. Let me go there, he said.



Mary and Elizabeth



Another Fabulous Concert at St Mark's Church

Concert on Saturday, 9 February 2013 at 7.30pm in St Mark's Church given by Taylor Wilson, Stewart Kempster and Clive Simmonds.

Entrance is free and there will be a retiring offering in aid of the St Mark's

piano fund.

We were delighted that you were all so enthusiastic after our concert last February to celebrate the arrival of the new organ at St Mark's. I'm delighted that Tracey (Taylor Wilson) and Stewart have agreed to join us for a second concert next February. This year we also have a new piano at St Mark's to enjoy and this will widen the range of items which we can include in our programme. Tracey has had a particularly busy few months. She is singing in a series of concerts in Switzerland at present. During October, when Stewart and I were working in Hong Kong (enjoying the company of another part of the Royden family) Tracey joined us for a couple of weeks and gave a number of performances with the big band of Colin Aitchison at "Ned Kelly's Last Stand", as well as an interview on Hong Kong Radio. In the last two months she performed at the opening of the new Bond film "Skyfall" in Glasgow's Grosvenor cinema, gave a further performance of her show "Alchemy" which includes a wide variety of songs performed with cello, piano and accordionist, and gave a series of performances of songs written especially for her by the Scottish composer, John McCleod, along with songs by Debussy, Ravel and Kurt Weill. We've made provisional plans for the programme on February 9th and it is extremely varied – I think there's plenty for everyone to enjoy - and it includes a few opportunities for audience participation. I do hope you'll be there. (You may be interested to look at Tracey's latest newsletter www.taylorwilson.com)

Kisizzi Appeal In our appeal for Kisizzi hospital our churches have now raised over £5,000 which will be hugely appreciated by those working so hard in Kisizzi and engaging in the work there. Thank you so much for your outstanding generosity. Thank you too for your prayers for Kisizzi which are greatly valued too and an equally important element of our support for this critical work. *Sam Cappleman*

Bedford Town Band will be holding a Christmas Concert at Putnoe Heights Church on Friday 21 December at 7.30pm. Tickets £8, Conc £6, available from Frescoes Coffee House, Mill St or on the door on the night.

Christmas Cards A board will be available at the back of the Church for anyone who wishes to send

Christmas Greetings to their friends at St Mark's.

The Craft group at St. Mark's would like to thank everybody for their support and are pleased to say that they have made £760 for the church.

Chat and Play at St. Mark's restarts on Thursday 10 January at 9.30am

Chat and Make restarts Monday 14 January 2013 at 1.30pm.

Storybox at St Mark's restarts on Thursday 10 January at 12 noon

Junior Church (Putnoe Heights) has been invited to Carol sing at Anjulita court on Sunday 23 December at 3pm and at Puttenhoe on Monday 24th December at 11am. if you would like to join us to bring some Christmas cheer to the residents you are very welcome to join us.

Putnoe Heights New Year Lunch. Sunday 20 January 2013 at 1.00pm. Tickets now available from Putnoe Office and at coffee time after church on Sundays. Adults £8.00, children under 10, £4.50. Three courses with drinks included. Book early to secure tickets.

Footprints New Year's Day Walk. Meet at Bromham Mill at 10.30 am on Tuesday 1st January for easy walk followed by simple lunch at Putnoe Heights. All welcome.

Christmas Blessings to everyone in the Partnership from Deborah Wallace and family; no cards will be sent. Thank you all for your many prayers.

Putnoe Heights Communal Christmas Card will be up from Sunday 2 December. Wish your friends at Church a Merry Christmas and donate to our charity

The Bedford and District Christian Aid Committee have been granted a collecting day at Tesco Cardington Road store on Saturday 12 January 2013. If you would like to volunteer to help on this day please speak to Carolyn for further details.

Church Christmas Cards in aid of Kisizzi are on sale at St Mark's Church at 25p each.

District Secretary Urgently wanted for the Beds, Essex and Herts MWiB. (Methodist Women in Britain) The person should be computer literate, prepared to attend meetings in London and locally as well as supporting the President in arranging district events and be a point of contact for any queries about the District. For further information contact Ruth Watkins, ruthmwatkins@aol.com or on 01296 485087.

St. Mark's Church Office reopens Monday 7 **Putnoe Office** reopen Wednesday 2 January

Thursday Prayer Group will meet on Jan 3

Putnoe Heights Carol Singers raised £124 at Library Walk last weekend (in aid of BECHAR) Thank you to the singers, musicians and providers of very welcome refreshments.

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Thank you to those who have helped prepare our churches for worship over Christmas

Holy Communion If you are or know of anybody who is housebound and who would like communion, please tell one of the ministers

Fourth Candle - The Candle of Joy (Pink candle) Mary the Mother of Jesus

Leader: May your hearts be filled with joy as you hear the song of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

All: **Thanks be to God**

Leader: Last Sunday we lit the Candles of Hope, Peace and Love (*A person now lights the Candles of Hope, Peace, and Love*)

Today we light the Fourth Candle of Advent, the Candle of Joy, as we remember Mary the mother of Jesus

Luke Chapter 1 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your light has shone in our darkened world through the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory may daily be renewed in your image and prepared like her for the coming of your Son, who is the Lord and Saviour of all. Blessed be God for ever.
(*Light the fourth pink candle now.*)

Leader: Let us pray:
All: **Lord Jesus, light of the world, blessed is Gabriel, who brought good news; blessed is Mary, your mother and ours. Bless your Church preparing for Christmas; and bless us your children, who long for your coming.**

Rest In Peace

On the Sunday following a funeral service we remember in church those who have died. We light a candle to symbolise the light of Christ which eternally shines and brings hope. If you would like a person remembered in our service when the candle is lit, perhaps on an anniversary or birthday, please inform the ministers, or telephone the church office.

Brian Keith Taylor (Taz)

May the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.'



St Mark's Messy Church Future dates: all 3.45 to 5.30pm ,
Wednesday 16 January,
Wednesday 20 February

Forthcoming Funerals

Please remember these families and friends in your prayers.

The funeral of Maureen Rose Paul will take place at Bedford Crematorium on Tuesday 8 January at 4.00pm



Methodist President's Christmas Message

In his Christmas message, the Revd Dr Mark Wakelin, President of the Methodist Conference, urges people to discover a "vulnerable God" in Jesus this festive season.

The full text of the message follows:

"Truly this was the Son of God!



"I was asked once by a well-known broadcaster, 'do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?' I replied, as you do, by asking him, 'it depends on what you mean by, 'Son of God.' His reply shook me because he then said, 'It's a perfectly simple question, 'Is Jesus Christ the Son of God?' My own thought was immediately, 'I wonder which bit of 'Son of God' he is finding simple?'

"I presume he meant do I believe in a literal way? But that is hardly simple. Literal language is OK for baked beans and possibly sunsets, but it gets a bit thin when talking about most of the things that really matter such as love, sadness and wonder. It runs out of steam totally when talking of God. You can't say anything literal about God!

"I was once in an argument about the new hymn book (I am afraid I get a bit grumpy about some of the alterations to ancient poems that we make and think that our desire to modernise the old is a little like the Christians who wanted to cover the modesty of the paintings in the Sistine Chapel). My colleague disliked the word 'ineffable' because he felt no one would understand it. There is a certain irony in that as you can imagine! Given that 'ineffable' basically means something we can't understand, I would have thought it was a useful word to hang on to if we also want to talk about God. God is 'ineffable' - and that's the point.

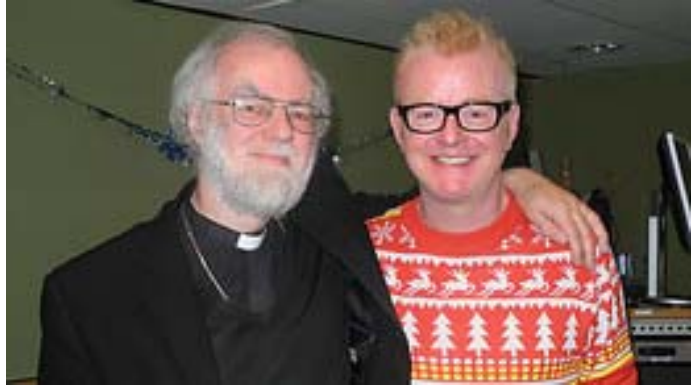
"That's the point of Christmas. How does God communicate with us when words are not adequate? How can we even try to talk of God when literal language so lets us down? God's answer is, of course, the 'self sending' - of a God who in Charles Wesley's words is, 'contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man.' What we can ever understand of God has to begin by taking account of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Who is written about in Colossians 1:15: 'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation' and verse 19: 'For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.' "The 'Word' is God, says John. Now this isn't simple language either, but it directs you to a kind of struggle to understand that is different from, for example, trying to get your head around Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity! Because it is truth revealed and held in a person, understanding and engaging with that truth is as much about love and obedience as it is about intellectual capacity and linguistic dexterity. We are not so much asked to assent to a philosophical or religious claim, 'yes I agree that Jesus is the Son of God,' but inhabit a story, the Christmas story, to live within ancient tale of human struggle and courage, of wonder and delight, of mystery and of angels declaring good news. Children get this much more easily than adults who want the whys and the wherefores of an extraordinary story which is far more than an odd biological claim on the Universe.

"Do I believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Of course, wonder of wonders, 'Let earth and heaven combine, angels and men agree, to praise in songs divine the incarnate deity.' I inhabit this ancient story and find it to be true. Wrapped in our clay we may not immediately recognise the creator of all things. But it is our life task, to discover a vulnerable God who is on a mission to finish the 'new creation' and is looking for followers.

"Happy Christmas!"

Archbishop of Canterbury Christmas Message

Recently on the Chris Evans Breakfast Show the archbishop spoke about the use of social media by church clergy, including the Pope on Twitter. The Archbishop has used You Tube for his Christmas message.



"It's a slightly strange way to start a Gospel you might think. We expect something a bit more like the beginning of the other Gospels: the story of Jesus's birth perhaps or his ancestry, or the story of Jesus's arrival on the public scene. But at the beginning of St John's Gospel what St John does is to frame his whole story against an eternal background. And what he's saying there is this: as you read this Gospel, as you read the stories about what Jesus does, be aware that whatever he does in the stories you're about to read is something that's going on eternally, not just something that happens to be going on in Palestine at a particular date. So when Jesus brings an overflow of joy at a wedding, when Jesus reaches out to a foreign woman to speak words of forgiveness and reconciliation to her, when Jesus opens the eyes of a blind man or raises the dead, all of this is part of something that is going on forever. The welcome of God, the joy of God, the light of God, the life of God - all of this is eternal. What Jesus is showing on Earth is somehow mysteriously part of what is always true about God. And that's why it's central to this beginning of John's Gospel - that he says the light shines in the darkness and the darkness doesn't swallow it up. How could the darkness swallow it up? If these works of welcome and forgiveness, of light and life and joy, are always going on, then actually nothing can ever make a difference to them. And that's why at the climax of this wonderful passage, St John says, the Word of God, the outpouring of God's life, actually became flesh and blood. And we saw it - we saw in this human life the eternal truth about God. We saw an eternal love, an eternal relationship; we saw an eternal joy and a light and a life. So as we read these stories we know that nothing at all can make a difference to the truth, the reality, they bring into the world. This is indeed the truth; this is where life is to be found. And this explains why at the end of St John's Gospel, he famously says that if we tried to spell out all that this means, there would be no end of the books that could be written. So in the light of that overflowing joy and everlasting truth, I wish you every blessing and happiness for this Christmas and the year ahead."

+ *Archbishop Rowan*

You can cut and paste either of these links to see the video

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2012/12/in-the-beginning-was-the-word-archbishop-of-canterbury-encourages-reading-st-john%E2%80%99s-gospel-this-christmas-in-reflections-video.aspx>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=sYNBSe2JFQk